not returned to the exporter, it is not possible to draw samples therefrom for testing in the Indian laboratories.

(e) In order to avoid concurrence of Sudan dye contamination in the export of chilli and chilli products from India, Spices Board has started conducting compulsory sampling of all chilli/chilli products export consignments from India and testing it for Sudan I, II, III and IV and aflatoxin. With effect from 10th March, 2005, no consignment of chilli, chilli products or other food products containing chilli in whatsoever form shall be exported unless a certificate is issued by the Spices Board certifying that the consignment does not contain Sudan I to IV and aflatoxin beyond acceptable levels and, therefore, is fit for export to the identified destination.

Major chilli producing States had also been advised to initiate and sustain action with the specific objective of preventing use of Sudan I by the food industry.

Exit of Tea Business by Tata Tea

2943. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Tata Tea Company has decided to exit the Tea Plantation Business in South India;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it has submitted any plan to transfer seventeen tea gardens to a new private limited company to be formed by a group of its own employees; and

(d) if so, the Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (d) As per the information available, M/s. Tata Tea Limited has 8 freehold estates spread across Kerala and Tamil Nadu and 17 estates in the 'concession area' which reportedly is in the Kannan Devan Hills. The 'concession' area represents land given on perpetual lease by the Poonjar Chief over 100 years ago. It has been reported that M/s. Tata Tea proposes to arrange sale or transfer of the 8 freehold estates outside the 'concession area' subject to approval of their shareholders. As per the information available, the company has

transferred the business of 17 estates in the 'concession area' as a going concern to a new Private Limited company called Kannan Deven Hills Plantations Company Private Limited (KDHP) immediately after the close of business as on 31st March, 2005. The transfer has been funded through a mix of equity, bank loans and subordinated debt from Tata Tea. The usage of land would be governed by the provisions of the lease deed and shall be exercised in accordance with all legal safeguards as necessary. The legal issues involved in the transfer of land rights are to be examined by the concerned State Governments.

Liberalisation of norms for concessional duty on crude palm oil

2944. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has liberalized certain norms for concessional duty on crude palm oil as per media reports; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) The Central Government has revised range of total carotenoid content (as beta carotene) from 500mg/kg-2500mg/kg to 250mg/kg-2500mg/kg and acid value from 2 to 4 for crude palm oil, for being eligible for the customs duty of 80%. This, however, will be subject to actual user condition *i.e.* for manufacture of refined oil, refined palmolein, vanaspati, bakery shortening or inter-esterified fats only.

Production and export of spices

2945. SHRI CHO. S. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total quantity and value of each of the spices produced in the country during the last three years;

(b) what is the quantity of spices consumed locally in the country;

(c) what is the total quantity of spices exported alongwith its value during the last three years with individual breakup of these spices; and